C.C. attended Amherst College in Massachusetts. He and the faculty at Amherst did not always agree on how things should be run so he left school around the turn of the 20th century and went back home where he started a foundry. When that proved unsatisfactory he managed a bank branch in Sioux City and tried his hand at sales for a chemical plant in Des Moines.

By 1904 he had made his way west, taking up temporary residence in Salem, Oregon, with his older cousin and her husband, Winas and Ernst Hofer. Like scales of other cross-country immigrants to Oregon at the time, C.C. found work in the sawmills and logging camps of the Willamette Valley, making ends meet while also learning the ins and outs of the state’s chief industry. In late 1904, he landed a job in sales with the Tongue Point Lumber Company in Astoria, Oregon. Tongue Point specialized in products milled from Sitka spruce and Douglas fir. The mill’s price list included a wide range of items including washing machine tub parts, well tubing, wagon box sets, windmill stock, scores of moulding and millwork items, and timbers up to 24x24 and 90 feet long, each requiring multiple rail cars to ship. It was young Charlie Patrick’s job to get these items to market.

Despite C.C.’s success at Tongue Point, a few years later Ernst Hofer persuaded him to attempt a career in banking and for three years he gave it a try—working as a cashier at First State Bank of Independence, Oregon. That failed venture soured him on the banking business so he turned back to lumber, and by 1910 he was handling sales for the Bridal Veil Falls Lumbering Company. The company had a sawmill on Larch Mountain and used a flume to transport rough cut lumber down the mountain at the end of a 55-hour workweek. As World War I exploded in Europe, The Patrick Company ventured into a co-op sales agreement with a dozen other Oregon companies to form The Patrick Lumber Company, one of the first wholesale lumber trading firms.

In late 1914 he partnered with William Brushoff, a former colleague from Douglas Fir Sales Company, to form The Patrick Company. By 1920, C.C. Patrick as sales manager. The co-op gave C.C. his first taste of the lumber trading business. If it involved a buyer and a seller and there was a margin in it for him, Charlie Patrick would give it a try.

Over the years, C.C. came to appreciate the role well-financed lumber traders could play in helping to ensure producers were financially able to make the products he was selling. He was a firm believer in the merits of retained earnings and as a result, his company was well positioned to finance the sawmills. In the early days of Roseburg Forest Products, that company’s founder, Kenneth Ford, would travel to Portland and pre-sell the following week’s production to Patrick and other lumber traders, taking a check in advance to finance the mill’s operations on a promise to deliver the goods the following week. Similarly, on several occasions Patrick Lumber purchased logging rights to timber on behalf of a valued supplier, receiving in return the right to sell 100% of the supplier’s production. Once logged, the land was considered nearly worthless and Patrick Lumber would buy the cutover land, reforest it, and add it to the company’s asset base. After C.C. passed away, these second growth forestlands became the primary assets of the Patrick Land Company, formed by his son Jack in the 1970s. When these lands were divested during the 1970s and ‘80s they returned a good profit to the family members who were C.C.’s heirs.

Politically, C.C. Patrick was a fiscal conservative, with leanings toward libertarianism. He believed smaller government is better government and that, for the most part, government should stay out of the way and allow the market forces of supply and demand to take care of economic issues. He was not averse to involve himself in politics when he felt the situation called for it, often writing passionate letters to elected officials detailing his positions. As a prominent Portland businessman he carried some political sway, and in 1939 he wrote a personal letter to Wendell Willkie to pledge his influence and support of Willkie should he decide to run for President. Willkie replied with a personal letter in which he claimed to have no political ambitions whatsoever. He promptly ran for and received the 1940 Republican nomination before being soundly defeated as Franklin Roosevelt was elected for a third term.

C.C. Patrick was generous to his community. He believed in the idea of giving back and helping those in need and he instilled these values in his children. He was also an avid golfer, though some who knew him well cautioned that “avid” is not to be confused with “expert.” C.C. was socially active, a member of the Waverly Country Club, The University Club, The Multnomah Athletic Club, The Arlington Club and the Portland Rotary. C.C. Patrick remained president of the Patrick Lumber Company right up until his death in 1960. During his 60-year career in the lumber industry he became lifelong friends with some of the most colorful figures in the industry ever knew. In pioneering the art of lumber trading, Charlie Patrick helped establish in the industry the principles of trustworthiness and forthrightness that still drive the trading business today. Over the decades many a lumber trader has come and gone and many others are still at it. But one would be very hard pressed to find a single individual who approached the business with the same high level of integrity and sense of honor that Charlie Patrick brought to every deal.

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